

FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

IN CHARGE OF

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THE PROGRESS OF GERMAN NURSES

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THE work of Sister Agnes Karll and her associates has been to gather into a self-governing organization all of the scattered individuals working independently, and the keen mind of Sister Agnes foresees that the near future is going to bring great changes, as a number of large and magnificent city hospitals are being built which are preparing to establish their own training-schools, and these will undoubtedly be on more modern lines than anything heretofore. The second annual report of the German Nurses' Organization, which now numbers about six hundred members, states the two leading motives of the organization to be, first, to gather into an effective whole all of the self-supporting nurses of the country; second, to encourage women of the best type to enter the nursing profession.

It has been a herculean piece of work to found this society of nurses. It was so absolutely new for nurses to be organized outside of the training-school associations. A society in Germany has numberless details to carry before public authorities, such as the Police Department, the Departments of Education and of Internal Affairs, before it can be allowed to form and carry on its affairs. Our American secretaries and other officers, hard-worked though they may often be, have no conception of the exhaustive statistics and reports which the German nurses have to make to public bureaus, or the immense amount of detail which they have to attend to—for instance, the State insurance, which I will tell of later.

For ten years Sister Agnes Karll had been unconsciously preparing for her organizing work. She was trained in one of the best Red Cross hospitals, and ten years of private duty gave her opportunity to observe conditions. There is probably no one in Germany better informed on the whole nursing question, and the necessity of union among the scattered "free" nurses bore urgently upon her. Yet so great were the difficulties in the way that it might not yet have been possible had she not found in a prominent and very influential member of Parliament,

Herr Rittmeister Praetorius, and in Frau Professor Krukenberg, of the German National Council of Women, the two friends and advisers with whose help she succeeded. Frau Krukenberg, who presided over the Nursing Section in Berlin last summer, takes the position that the day is past when nursing should be regarded as a monopoly of religious or closely restricted orders, and that it should be regarded as a profession like any other, into which women may honorably enter with the purpose of earning their living. She encouraged the idea of a self-governing body, and Herr Praetorius, an elderly man and a perfect type of the old-school courteous and considerate gentleman, although conservative, understood this movement of modern self-supporting women to struggle into better conditions as few others have. For this we must to a great extent, doubtless, feel grateful to his wife, who is also a most sympathetic and intelligent friend of all educational movements. The great influence of Herr Praetorius in public life gave the young society a secure official footing and secured it a hearing in the departments of government.

The death of Herr Praetorius a year ago, and the continued interest of his wife in the organization, have been mentioned before this.

The following extracts from the second annual report should, I think, interest all nurses, and I hope they may especially appeal to our German-American members, many of whom might know of ways in which to help the work of the society:

"That the general public now recognizes the importance and significance of the two leading motives of our organization—namely, to gather into an effective association all of the self-supporting nurses of our country, and to encourage women of the best type to enter the nursing profession—was fully proved by the special attention given to the nursing question by the International Congress of Women during its session in Berlin from June 13 to 18. The entire day of the 16th was devoted to this subject in the large hall of the Philharmonic, under the leadership of Frau Professor Krukenberg, and reports of extreme interest were read from England, America, France, Sweden, and Italy, whilst Germany was officially represented by the president of the German Nurses' Organization with a paper on 'The Future Training of the German Nurses.'

"Various representatives of German nursing shared in the discussion, but the matrons of our largest hospitals declined any participation whatever in the efforts of the woman's movement.

"Also in the meeting of the International Council of Nurses, held on May 17 in the Victoria Lyceum, Germany was represented solely by the organization, whose president had the pleasure of announcing to the English and American delegates that it was ready to enter into the International Council as a national body.

"The friendly interest which was taken in our development in England and America before we were even conscious of it has been shown in various ways. The Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland conferred honorary membership upon the president of the organization and bestowed upon her its badge.

The Board of Directors of THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING has presented the organization with its valuable bound volumes to date as a gift for our library.

"In its internal affairs the work of the organization has increased enormously, and the officers, in addition to the routine business, have held twenty-seven meetings in which to decide upon two hundred and fifty-four applications, fifteen of which were refused. It has only been necessary twice to call the Advisory Council upon questions of the exclusion of three members. In order to deal more efficiently with the increasing details and to insure a quorum, the number of officers has been increased to seven.

"The official badge of the organization has been adopted from a design of the director of the Frankfort Academy of Art, made after one used hundreds of years ago by a nursing order, and now adapted to and legally protected for our members.

"With the constant increase in our secretarial and directory work, the narrow quarters of our old office hampered our work greatly. With the occupation of our new rooms at 22, Nürnberger Str., W., 50, we not only have ample accommodation for all our present work, but also the privilege of adding to our quarters in the future, while the possession of a fine, large room for gatherings, social purposes, reading, and sitting-room will enable our members to come together as they could not heretofore do. We hope also to be able occasionally to put up transient guests for the night if our members in travelling will be satisfied with simple accommodations. We bespeak the interest of our members for the complete furnishing of our club-room, and most especially for our library, both of which will mean so much in the development of the private life and interests of our members, which at first, in the press of outer circumstances, have had to be left in the background.

"Part of the secretarial work of the organization is the compiling of an enormous mass of statistics, rendered necessary by the requirements of the Berlin Department of Statistics and by our other public relations. Not all of the sisters have understood the importance and necessity of filling in the details, and also the forms supplied every two years by the public department by no means now cover all of the new lines of work developing for nurses or created by our members. It is hoped that next year improved blank forms will facilitate this important but burdensome labor.

"Three thousand four hundred and forty-five letters and cards have been received in the offices, and three thousand six hundred written and sent from same, one thousand three hundred and fifteen of which were personally written by the president; three thousand and one pieces of printed matter have been sent out by the secretary and bureau sister. Besides this, with the ceaseless telephone calls, each sister in the office has a regular office hour, as only thus can the demands of the day be met, and the necessary order and system with regard to the health of the sisters in charge be preserved.

"When we consider the work of the past year we must rejoice at what has been accomplished, while we yet feel keenly how much yet presses for which time and strength are inadequate.

"A large city hospital, the new Charité, has opened its doors under most favorable auspices to our sisters and pupils recommended by our officers. We are also offered opportunity for post-graduate courses.

"Our first two pupils have taken their examination in Frankfort. Yet when one sees the increasing need of nurses, and realizes that within a year new

hospitals with at least three thousand five hundred bed capacity will be opened, one must say anxiously, 'Where shall the needed number of educated women come from?'

"And we long to so upbuild the conditions of nursing work that we could with clear conscience say to hundreds of young women, Come and learn our calling, the most glorious, the most blessed, that women can find.'

"The Women's Councils of many towns and cities offer opportunity for addresses and talks for propaganda. Yet it is too seldom realized that the present deficiency of nurses is the result of the inadequate system of management of our nurse-training corporations and hospitals. Then, too, one's courage sinks the more when one thinks of the sisters who have grown old or ill, or have fallen into necessity, and who look to us to help them.

"The Emergency Fund and the Convalescent Homes plans have not been neglected, but have been quietly considerably advanced, only that the need comes faster than the help. The Committee on the Emergency Fund has been formed, and an appeal will shortly be issued. Then each of us must help it to reach warm hearts and willing hands. We have also opportunities offered us, in coöperation with other self-supporting women, to obtain building lots in Drossen, and a most beautiful site in the woods in Vogelsberg. But to bring these possibilities to reality calls for so much time, strength, and energy, and one meets actually so much indifference and apathy, that one's force would fail if it were not that in the human soul hope and belief in divine ideals are insurmountable and conquer human weakness.

"We must believe that the next year will see our hopes and plans greatly advanced, and we must remind our members that an independent and self-governing association such as ours brings with it not only rights, but also duties and responsibilities. Each one must do her best to increase our membership. Our treasury, so far as our necessary expenses go, is in a most healthy condition, with a small surplus. But our office expenses will increase rather than diminish, and, while our membership dues will suffice to cover them, we need to add in every way possible to our fund for the aged or afflicted sisters.

"AGNES KARLL, President."

L. L. DOCK.

(To be continued.)

